

Memorandum

To: Planning Commission

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Date: April 15, 2015

Subject: Old Town Historic Core Plan

MEETING PURPOSE

The purpose of this study session is to: 1) provide additional background information and purpose regarding the proposed Old Town Historic Core Plan and 2) seek the Planning Commission's input regarding policy level questions and implications that the Commission would like to consider during review of proposed updates to the Zoning Code as part of the Historic Core Plan.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Comprehensive Plan includes policies regarding the preservation of historic properties and character and development within the Old Town zone. The Historic Core, shown in *Attachment A*, is proposed as an overlay within the Old Town zone to address the area that includes the majority of the City's historic and landmarked properties and is Redmond's original business district. Policies that provide direction for maintaining design standards and the Old Town zone are flagged in *Attachment B*.

The scope and approach for the Historic Core Plan is based on this policy direction and on feedback from the 2013 joint City Council and Landmark Commission meeting, shown in *Attachment C*, and interests expressed by property and business owners. Per this discussion and with the overarching interest in enhancing economic and neighborhood vitality, development of the Plan is guided by the following goals:

- Address elements including the streetscape, character and design;
- Consider opportunities for art;
- Develop a unique marketing and event plan; and
- Promote opportunities for grant funding and community partnerships.

The Plan development process includes an integrated approach to tie together the Historic Core including the Gilman Streetscape project with other recent and upcoming Downtown projects such as the Downtown Park, Cleveland Streetscape and the Redmond Central Connector (RCC).

URBAN CENTER DESIGN STANDARDS

As part of the rewrite to the City's Zoning Code during 2009 - 2011, the Code Rewrite Commission recommended a comprehensive rewrite of the City's design standards. The City Council agreed with the Commission's recommendation and there has been interest particularly in updates to the Urban Center Design Standards. The interest in this significant update stemmed from input from the community, staff, and City officials. With the consulting assistance of Makers, work began in 2014 and includes sequencing the effort such that the first proposed set of updates to design standards are specific to the Historic Core.

On February 24, 2015, City staff and Makers met with the City Council in a study session to present the culmination of their work - an evaluation of the current design standards and response to community objectives, Comprehensive Plan policies, emerging trends and best planning and design review practices. Makers' evaluation process included discussions with staff involved with design review, interviews with developers who have experienced the design review process and built projects in Redmond, workshops with the general public, and a review of design guidelines established by comparable communities and other technical analysis.

In addition to their evaluation, Makers' worked with the staff and the City Council to establish ten design principles, included in *Attachment D* that provide guidance in updating the Design Standards. This work and the relevant portions of the current Redmond Zoning Code (RZC) are part of the framework for development of amendment concepts for current discussion with the Design Review Board.

OBSERVATIONS AND KEY ELEMENTS OF HISTORIC CORE PLAN

During the past year, staff has completed several community engagement activities and events to gain additional knowledge of the existing conditions and interests in the Historic Core and to inform development of the Plan. This process allowed staff to connect with stakeholder groups including business and property owners and to learn aspects in addition to Makers' findings, such as those specific to business operations housed in historic structures. Additional information in this regard is available in the Commission's January 14, 2015 meeting packet.

Based on the observation and findings, the key proposed elements for the Old Town Historic Core Plan include:

- **Character** - Establish the foundation from which complementary design standards will be developed and provide guidance for other elements that contribute to the character, such as art, landscaping, and monumentation for landmark structures;

- **Public realm improvements:** Confirm and refine as needed the standards for public realm improvements such as sidewalk upgrades and standardized seating, and identify needed investments;
- **Economic Vibrancy** - Provide an implementation strategy for supporting and increasing economic vibrancy for Old Town's Historic Core;
- **Promotion** - Engage often with business proprietors, property owners, and the community; and
- **Coordination** – Collaborate with and coordinate Historic Core elements with other Downtown plans and projects as well as in the context of surrounding neighborhoods.

The Historic Core Plan is an overarching plan that will define the Core and provide context for the deliverables below. Preparation of these will be phased and will begin with the proposed amendments to the Zoning Code.

- Amendment to Redmond Zoning Code;
 - Historic Core design standards for development;
 - Historic Core Streetscape standards;
 - Downtown Pedestrian System map and code;
- Amendments to Historic Core Sign code in the Municipal Code;
- Amendments to wayfinding and place making standards;
- Historic Core Brand, Marketing, and Event Plan – includes place-based and utilitarian branding, a Historic Core logo palette, Historic Core webpage, coordination with other promotional programs such as Experience Redmond, and two-year event plan;
- Amendments to Comprehensive Plan – recognizing Historic Core and associated policies once the branding work is completed;
- Coordination with, supplements to, and amendments to related plans such as the Strategic Art Plan and Pedestrian/Bicycle Plan; and
- Developer, investor, and proprietor guides regarding property, programs, and grant opportunities specific to the Historic Core.

FRAMEWORK FOR REDMOND ZONING CODE UPDATE

The Commission previously met regarding the Historic Core Plan on January 14, February 25, and April 1, 2015 and noted several interests and questions regarding policy level implications for staff to address during the upcoming review of proposed amendments to Historic Core design standards. These include:

- Economic Constraints/Opportunities
- Development Impacts
- Mobility needs including transit, pedestrians, and bicyclists
- Design standards that are flexible to allow innovation but prescriptive such that there is predictability for the developer

- Design compatibility in a historic context
- Definition regarding how functional elements, such as street improvements, shape the overall experience and support the character of the Historic Core

At the Commission's April 15th meeting, staff would like learn the Commission's additional interests and questions. These will be considered during development of the staff recommended code updates and addressed in the Technical Committee report to the Commission for review starting in June 2015.

NEXT STEPS AND SCHEDULE

Staff will continue meeting periodically with property and business owners regarding proposed elements of the Plan, including updates to design standards for development projects in the Historic Core based on Makers' recommendations.

Planning Commission's formal review and public hearing for staff recommended updates to the Historic Core design standards are planned for June and July 2015 and additional portions of the Historic Plan scope, described above, will likely come before the Commission in 2016. Staff will also meet with other City boards and committees such as the Arts and Culture Commission, Parks and Trails Commission, and Pedestrian/Bicycle Advisory Committee to provide and update and seek input.

Please contact Kimberly Dietz, 425-556-2415, kdietz@redmond.gov and Sarah Stiteler, 425-556-2469, ssiteler@redmond.gov with questions and for additional information.

ENCLOSURES

- A. Historic Core Map
- B. Comprehensive Plan Policies Regarding Historic Preservation and Old Town Design Standards
- C. Summary of Joint City Council/Landmark Commission, October 8, 2013 Meeting
- D. Principles for Design Standards Update